

DUXBURY BEACH

(The following excerpts are from *Exploring New England Shores*, a recently published book by John F. Waters. A beachcomber's handbook, it discusses coastline formation, shore ecology, crafts, aquariums, recipes and New England sea monsters. -- Ed.)

A tombolo is a sand bar beach that connects two islands or connects an island to the mainland at low tide. Land-tied islands are found along Cape Cod Bay west of Wellfleet Harbor. The Duxbury, Massachusetts Saquish Neck beach is a tombolo connecting former islands of Gurnet Point and Saquish Head to the coast near Plymouth.

The barrier beaches of Rhode Island from Pt. Judith to Watch hill all have dunes; so does the barrier beach of Plum Island, Horseneck Beach, and the long sand spits or bay mouth bars of Duxbury and Plymouth in Massachusetts.

Just to the north of Boston there are sizeable marshes in Saugus and Revere. Heading south, there are marshes in the North River section of Scituate and in the town of Marshfield (no doubt the reason it was given its name).

The Green Harbor Marsh is in Duxbury. On Cape Cod there is the marsh in Barnstable and one nice little marsh in Falmouth called Little Sippewissett marsh.

(This new book is sold at Westwinds Bookshop. -- Ed.)

Beach Statistics

Did you know that Duxbury Beach at its narrowest point is only 70 yards wide, and that at high tide it is slightly narrower? At its maximum, it is less than 300 yards wide. Most of the beach is low, too, and a storm accompanied by high tides finds the water of Massachusetts Bay surging across the beach.

Geologists say Duxbury Beach is really not a beach, but a sandspit. According to members of the Protest Committee who made a careful survey of the situation, Duxbury Beach differs from others in that it lacks an inclined plane of sand on a shoreline with "substantial solid land in back of it. The Duxbury Beach sandspit is bounded by Massachusetts Bay on one side and on the other side by marshes covered by water at high tide and by Duxbury Bay."